



TEXAS FORENSIC SCIENCE COMMISSION

*1700 North Congress Ave., Suite 445
Austin, Texas 78701*

TEXAS FORENSIC SCIENCE COMMISSION QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

The Texas Forensic Science Commission (Commission) met in person and by videoconference on January 30, 2026, at the Barbara Jordan State Office Building at 1601 Congress Avenue, Room 2.035, Austin, Texas 78701.

Members Present: Jeffrey Barnard, MD, Presiding Officer
Michael Coble, PhD
Mark Daniel, JD
Patrick Buzzini, PhD
Stacey Mitchell, DNP
Jasmine Drake, PhD
Sarah Kerrigan, PhD
Erika Ziemak, MS
Jarvis Parsons, JD

The following members attended the meeting via Zoom video conference: Dr. Jasmine Drake and Mr. Jarvis Parsons.

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Lynn Garcia, General Counsel
Chelsea Estes, Commission Coordinator
Leigh Tomlin, Associate General Counsel
Robert Smith, Senior Staff Attorney
Jarrah Kennedy, Scientific Program Coordinator
Veena Mohan, Assistant General Counsel
Steve Miller, Multimedia Producer
Rodney Soward, Licensing Program Specialist

During this meeting, the Commission considered and acted on the following items. The Commission took breaks as necessary.

1. Call meeting to order. Roll call for members. Excuse any absent board members.

Barnard called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Commissioners were present as indicated above.

2. Review and adopt minutes from the October 24, 2025 quarterly commission meeting.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Ziemak moved to approve the October 24, 2025, quarterly commission meeting minutes. Kerrigan seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

3. **Office administrative update (including, but not limited to, the following administrative items for update and discussion: FY2026 budget; implementation of ALiS licensing platform; and office construction). (General Counsel Garcia/Associate General Counsel Tomlin)**

Staff provided a projected budget for FY2026. Staff expects to move into its newly remodeled office space this summer in the William B. Travis state office building.

Staff reported migrating licensee and other data into ALiS, the newly developed licensing application system. All January 2026 and February 2026 expiring licensees can now renew their licenses in the new application platform. Staff expects to send notices to the March and April 2026 expiring licensees next week.

4. **Discuss and consider complaints and laboratory self-disclosures pending from the October 24, 2025 quarterly commission meeting and new complaints and laboratory self-disclosures received through January 9, 2026, as detailed below. (Commissioner Daniel)**

Self-Disclosures Received through January 9, 2026:

1. **No. 25.45; Center for Human Identification (Forensic Biology/DNA)**

A self-disclosure by the Center for Human Identification reporting the laboratory's CODIS administrator failed to issue a DNA report for a requested comparison.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis, case review, and corrective actions by the laboratory. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSALS: Coble, Ziemak

2. **No. 25.60; Brazoria County Crime Laboratory (Seized Drugs)**

A self-disclosure by the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office Crime Laboratory reporting an incident in its seized drugs section where the laboratory discovered, as part of an internal audit, that an analyst failed to individually identify and label exhibits A, B, and C of exhibit 002 in a case. Rather, a single evidence bag containing all three itemized exhibits was labeled 002A-C).

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis and corrective actions by the laboratory. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

3. **No. 25.61; Brazoria County Crime Laboratory (Seized Drugs)**

A self-disclosure by the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office Crime Laboratory reporting an incident in its seized drugs section where the laboratory discovered, as part of an internal audit, that an analyst failed to properly indicate that she re-packaged certain evidentiary items into laboratory supplied Ziplock bags for a case.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis, case review, and corrective actions by the laboratory. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

4. No. 25.62; Brazoria County Crime Laboratory (Seized Drugs)

A self-disclosure by the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office Crime Laboratory reporting an incident in its seized drugs section where the laboratory discovered, as part of an internal audit, that an analyst sealed an exhibit (001) with the incorrect date. In addition, exhibit (006-003 microcentrifuge tubes) in the case were labeled incorrectly as a different exhibit and sealed in the wrong bag.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis and corrective actions by the laboratory. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

5. No. 25.63; Brazoria County Crime Laboratory (Seized Drugs)

A self-disclosure by the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office Crime Laboratory reporting an incident where the laboratory failed to notify both the FSC and ANAB within the required 30-day notification window of several identified nonconformities.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis and corrective actions by the laboratory. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

6. No. 25.64; Quality Forensic Toxicology, LLC (Toxicology)

A self-disclosure by Quality Forensic Toxicology reporting an incident where a toxicology analyst performed casework before being licensed by the Commission.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis, case review, and corrective actions by the laboratory. Kerrigan seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

7. No. 25.66; Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences (Forensic Biology/DNA)

A self-disclosure by the Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences (SWIFS) reporting an incident where a Forensic Biology/DNA analyst concealed a DNA contamination event that occurred during the processing of known reference samples.

MOTION AND VOTE: Daniel moved to accept the self-disclosure for staff investigation under Section 651.307(d) of the Texas Administrative Code to determine whether the laboratory's determination of analyst misconduct is warranted and to assess whether the conduct merits any disciplinary action by the Commission. Parsons seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.

RECUSAL: Barnard

8. No. 25.68; Jefferson County Regional Crime Laboratory (Crime Scene Investigation; Seized Drugs; Forensic Biology Screening)

A self-disclosure by the Jefferson County Regional Crime Laboratory reporting an incident where a licensed seized drugs and forensic biology screening analyst engaged in a romantic relationship with a federal prison inmate incarcerated for trafficking methamphetamine in violation of the laboratory's conflict policies and the FSC's Code of Professional Responsibility.

MOTION AND VOTE: Daniel moved to accept the self-disclosure for staff investigation under Section 651.307(d) of the Texas Administrative Code to review whether the laboratory's determination of analyst misconduct is warranted and to assess whether the conduct merits any disciplinary action by the Commission. Kerrigan seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.

9. No. 25.69; Serological Research Institute (Forensic Biology/DNA)

A self-disclosure by the Serological Research Institute reporting an incident where an analyst misinterpreted a urobilinogen positive test result as a positive detection of feces.

MOTION AND VOTE: Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis, case review, and corrective actions by the laboratory. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.

10. No. 25.65; Dallas Police Department Crime Scene Division (Evidence; Crime Scene Investigation)

A self-disclosure by the Dallas Police Department Crime Scene Division reporting an incident where a crime scene investigation analyst forgot to collect a bullet fragment from a double homicide but photographed the evidence marker and documented the bullet fragment in the case file. The analyst was not allowed to re-enter the crime scene to look for the bullet, and the assigned homicide detective could not locate the bullet fragment.

MOTION AND VOTE: Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis and corrective actions by the laboratory. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.

11. No. 25.70; Austin Forensic Science (Evidence; Crime Scene Investigation)

A self-disclosure by Austin Forensic Science reporting an issue in its crime scene investigation unit where a crime scene analyst mislabeled and ultimately mixed-up swabs collected for a burglary of a residence case.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis, case review, and corrective actions by the laboratory. Coble seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

12. No. 25.72; Department of Public Safety – Tyler (Evidence; Seized Drugs)

A self-disclosure by the Department of Public Safety – Tyler reporting lost evidence (item 01, a small plastic bag submitted as containing off white crystalline substance submitted to the laboratory along with two other small plastic bags of evidence containing a vape device for analysis and a cigarette for storage).

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis and corrective actions by the laboratory. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

Complaints Pending from October 24, 2025:

13. No. 25.29; Sween, Gretchen (Houston Forensic Science Center; Ron Smith and Associates; Forensic Biology/DNA, Friction Ridge)

A complaint filed by attorney Gretchen Sween on behalf of Lucky Ward, alleging evidence tampering by Ron Smith and Associates and Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC) analysts for purposes of obtaining a latent print “match” in a cold case. The complaint further alleges significant problems with forensic DNA testing spanning over 10 years.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to table the complaint pending staff review of the laboratory’s response to the allegations in the complaint including relevant DNA data. Coble seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

Complaints Received through January 9, 2026

14. No. 25.73; Hyman, Jennifer (ExperTox; Toxicology)

A complaint by Jennifer Hyman, an attorney for Susan Embry (convicted in Georgia for her husband’s murder), alleging negligence and/or misconduct in a hair analysis performed by Expertox’s former director, Dr. Ernest Lykissa.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to dismiss the complaint because the Commission previously investigated toxicology hair analysis concerns by Expertox and issued a final investigative report (20.55) detailing significant analytical, interpretation, and validation-related issues. Kerrigan seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

15. No. 25.74; Smith, Antoine (Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A complaint by defendant Antoine Smith alleging a crime scene detective's testimony that he swabbed the trigger and trigger guard of a recovered weapon is contradicted by his report detailing a swab of the trigger guard only (the trigger itself is not mentioned in the report). DNA analysis on the swab contained a mixture of two individuals. The defendant could not be excluded as a contributor. The complaint requests an affidavit by a forensic scientist explaining why a trigger-guard only swab weakens the trigger pull inference, how DNA mixture statistics could be overstated versus modern probabilistic genotyping, and the possibility that DNA can be transferred from one surface to another during swabbing.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to table the complaint pending the review of additional requested information and a response from the laboratory. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSAL: Barnard

16. No. 25.77; North Texas Federal Public Defender's Office (Houston Police Department; Firearms/Toolmarks)

A complaint filed by the North Texas Public Defenders' Office on behalf of defendant Charles Mamou alleging that, in 1999, a former HPD firearm/toolmark analyst, testified that magazine markings found on an unfired cartridge recovered at the scene of a homicide showed the bullet had been loaded into the same magazine as multiple fired cartridge casings from a different scene associated with Mamou (separate shooting for which Mamou admitted involvement, but was not being tried).

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to accept the complaint for investigation by a panel of Commissioners under Section 651.307(b) of the Texas Administrative Code for the purpose of making observations regarding the integrity and reliability of the forensic analysis conducted and to identify best practices and other recommendations related to magazine mark comparisons. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to form an investigative panel consisting of: Dr. Buzzini, Mr. Daniel, and Dr. Barnard. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

17. No. 26.01; Newsome, Jacob (Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A complaint alleging the presence of unidentified male DNA on the body of a murder victim requesting a review to determine whether all forensic procedures and reporting obligations were followed or any deviations from protocols occurred.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to table the complaint pending review and response by the laboratory. Coble seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

Staff Dismissals

18. No. 25.71; Allen, Elaine (Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences; Autopsy)

A complaint by Elaine Allen regarding the autopsy of her son and a finding of suicide. The complaint alleges several tests were not conducted as warranted and points out errors allegedly made by the coroner.

19. No. 25.75; Yarborough, Jason (Laboratory Not Identified; Non-forensic allegations)

A complaint by Jason Yarborough alleging he was falsely convicted of a crime he did not commit. Specifically, he alleges a lack of any forensic evidence connecting him to the crime and that the state conducted no forensic analysis in his case.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to approve the staff dismissals of the complaint Nos. 25.71 and 25.75 for failure to allege any professional negligence or professional misconduct related to the forensic analysis of physical evidence and lack of jurisdiction. Ziemak seconded the motion. *The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

***RECUSAL: Barnard recused for No. 25.71.**

5. Discuss status of crime laboratory accreditation program, including: (Tomlin)

a. Summary of accreditation activities, communications, and reports received since the October 24, 2025 quarterly commission meeting;

Tomlin reported 7 accreditation related events for consideration by the Commission this quarter. None of the events required follow-up.

b. Summary of reported non-consensus proficiency testing results from accredited crime laboratories; and

Staff reported 15 proficiency monitoring non-consensus communications from laboratories this quarter. None of the proficiency tests required any further follow-up. Staff briefly discussed proposed changes to the categorization of reported non-consensus proficiency test results for better clarity. Staff will work with the Commission's scientific coordinator on the best way to categorize the reports and come up with a solution before the next Commission quarterly meeting. Kerrigan suggested requesting the proficiency test provider's summary report and the individual's test in each reported non-consensus proficiency test.

c. Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, amendments to Section 651.7, Disciplines Exempt from Commission

Accreditation Requirements by Administrative Rule, to exempt examinations or tests performed on non-lethal munitions from accreditation and licensing requirements.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to propose amendments to the rules as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Kerrigan seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

6. Discuss updates from licensing advisory committee, including: (Tomlin)

a. Report on licenses issued and renewed;

Tomlin reported there are currently 1,371 total licenses. Staff expects to renew 765 licenses this year. Staff anticipates issuing about 140 new licenses this year based on data for the year thus far.

b. Report and discuss items from January 29, 2026 Licensing Advisory Committee meeting;

Tomlin reported the Licensing Advisory Committee (LAC) met on January 29, 2026. The LAC introduced three new members: Celestina Rossi, Lauren Woolridge, and Ashleigh Berg and elected Celestina Rossi to serve as the LAC's Vice Chair.

Members Michelle Paulson and Celestina Rossi will host a training in collaboration with Commission staff on developing standard operating procedures for crime scene investigators. It will be held on March 30, 2026 – April 2, 2026, at the Barbara Jordan Conference Center in Austin.

The Committee has formed seven domain-based working groups that are developing objectives and study materials to revise and update the General Forensic Analyst and Technician licensing exams. The groups have conducted reviews of each domain tested on the exam for relevancy and updated reading and video materials accordingly. Each group has held meetings to finalize the revised exam study materials. The groups will soon begin drafting new questions with assistance from a psychometrician service that will provide training on question drafting and evaluate the content of the new exam. Staff expect the new exam to be complete within the next year.

c. Review and possibly adopt any coursework and/or criminal history evaluation recommendations from Licensing Advisory Committee;

There were no coursework evaluations this quarter.

d. Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, amendments to Section 651.207, Forensic Analyst and Forensic Technician Licensing Requirements, Including Initial License Term and Fee, Minimum Education and Coursework, General Forensic Examination, Proficiency

Monitoring, and Mandatory Legal and Professional Responsibility Training to: 1) remove the fee for a temporary forensic analyst and technician license; and 2) clarify scope of toxicology categories of licensure;

MOTION AND VOTE: *Parsons moved to adopt amendments to the rules as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Daniel seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

- e. Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, amendments to Section 651.216, Disciplinary Action to harmonize language related to disciplinary actions by the Commission with Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Article 38.01, Section 4-c;**

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to adopt amendments to the rules as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Kerrigan seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

- f. Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, amendments to Section 651.219, Code of Professional Responsibility to clarify the Section's applicability to accredited law enforcement agency crime laboratory managers only; and**

MOTION AND VOTE: *Ziemak moved to propose amendments to the rules as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

- g. Report on licensing issues identified by laboratories.**

There were no licensing issues to report this quarter.

7. Update re: Statewide Firearms Working Group, including the group's December 9, 2025 meeting with NIST. (Garcia/Smith)

Smith gave an update on the Firearms/Toolmark Working Group meetings. On September 20, 2025, Henry Swofford and Steve Lund from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) gave a demonstration of the Validation Assessment Tool (VAST) Texas firearms laboratories will be using to evaluate method performance across laboratories. The group is currently developing standard operating procedures across all Texas laboratories (as feasible) and noting differences in their methods and operations. The group has developed templates for documentation and validation of the new tools.

On December 9, 2025, the group hosted a virtual meeting to discuss findings and potential improvements to the beta version of VAST.

8. Update re: Statewide Working Group on Rapid DNA, including the group's November 7, 2025, and January 9, 2026, meetings in Austin, Texas. (Garcia)

Garcia provided an update on the work of the statewide Rapid DNA Working Group. The group developed a revised version of the FBI's memorandum of understanding (between accredited laboratories and law enforcement agencies). The group is also creating guidance on which sample types are suitable for this technology.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Kerrigan moved to appoint Celestina Rossi to the Statewide Task Force on Rapid DNA. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

9. Update re: Texas Forensic Analyst Apprenticeship Pilot (TFAAP) Program (Garcia)

a. Meetings on November 7, 2025 and January 9, 2026.

Garcia shared that the group is developing curriculum to support new forensic analysts in the areas of seized drugs, blood alcohol and DNA analysis in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety, the Center for Human Identification and the Institute for Forensic Research, Training and Innovation.

b. Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, new Subchapter G Texas Forensic Analyst Apprenticeship Program (TFAAP) to establish program rules for accredited crime laboratories and apprentices qualifying for the TFAAP program.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Kerrigan moved to propose amendments to the rules as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Parsons seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

10. Discuss recent and upcoming forensic development training and education projects. (Garcia)

Kennedy and Smith will attend the American Academy of Forensic Sciences annual meeting in New Orleans in February 2026. They will serve as presenters in several talks and a workshop with NIST.

Staff is also planning for the development of DNA interpretations for lawyers and judges training to be held later this year pursuant to a Court of Criminal Appeals grant in collaboration with the Center for American and International Law.

11. Report from the DNA Technical Leader Working Group on reporting and testimony. (Kennedy)

Kennedy gave an update on the DNA Technical Leader Working Group. There is a subgroup of individuals across different Texas laboratories working to improve testimony and communications concerning DNA findings. They are determining which strategies to pursue,

including guidance, new laboratory policies, or subsequent training. The Center for Human Identification will host a meeting for the group in Fort Worth, in March.

12. Update from the Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors (TACL D). (Dr. Peter Stout, Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors)

The Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors met on January 29, 2026. The main topic of discussion was the TFAAP program. Stout also reported that TACL D is researching the possibilities for hosting a vicarious trauma mental health workshop to take place in July 2026.

13. Consider possible agenda items for next quarterly meeting.

No additional items were discussed other than those noted throughout the agenda.

14. Schedule and location of future panel and quarterly commission meetings including, but not limited, to April 24, 2026; July 31, 2026; October 23, 2026; January 29, 2027, and April 30, 2027.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Parsons moved to direct staff to schedule the April 24, 2026, July 31, 2026, October 23, 2026, January 29, 2027, and April 30, 2027 quarterly meetings. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

15. Public comment.

There were no public comments other than that noted above.

16. Adjourn.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Parsons moved to adjourn the meeting. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adjourned the meeting at 10:36 a.m.*